

Children's Services



Is someone else looking after your child?

Information for Birth Parents



Warrington Borough Council



**If someone else is looking after your child it may be classed as 'private fostering'.
If someone else looks after your child, by law you must notify your local council.**

Every Child Matters in Warrington

Please read on for more information...

Children who are cared for on a full-time basis by people who are not their parents or a relative* may be in private foster care.

Private foster care occurs when a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) is cared for, and provided with accommodation, by an adult who is not a relative*, for 28 days or more, by private arrangement between parent and carer.

We, as a local authority, have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of privately fostered children.

*The Children Act defines 'relative' in relation to a child as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt. They could be a full or half relation and could be related by marriage. The term also includes step-parent. A cohabitee of the mother or father of the child would not qualify as relative, neither would extended family such as great aunt/uncle or parent's cousins.

This leaflet is for parents who will be placing their children, or have placed their children with private foster carers. The aim of this leaflet is to help you understand more about the law on private fostering and the role of Children's Services Department.

Do you mean me?

Read the following 3 questions and answer yes or no:

- Is your child living with and being looked after by someone else?
- Is your child below the age of 16 or 18 if disabled?
- Is your child being cared by someone who is not a 'relative' - as described above?

If you have answered yes to ALL of these questions then your child is being privately fostered.

What is private fostering?

Private fostering is an option sometimes used by parents who cannot provide full time care for their children. There may be all kinds of reasons for this, some examples are:

- Children sent to this country for education or health care by parents living overseas
- Children living with a friend's family as a result of parental separation, divorce or arguments at home
- Teenagers living with the family of a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Children whose parents have to be admitted to hospital for long periods

If your child is living with someone who is not related to them they are being privately fostered (unless the child has been placed by the local authority or voluntary organisation or they will not be staying for more than 27 days.)

Things you need to consider when placing your child with a private foster carer

Education

If your child is of school age you will need to discuss plans for their education with the private foster carer before the placement starts. It is best if both you and the private foster carer can arrange to visit the relevant school before the placement starts so that you can:

- Give the name and address of your child's previous school(s) so that school records



can be transferred and the new school will be aware of your child's progress and of any difficulties they have had.

- Discuss directly with the school your child's background and educational needs. Racial, cultural and linguistic needs should also be considered.
- Discuss how long your child will be at school, admission dates etc.

It is important that you ask the carers to pass on school reports and information about your child's progress to you.

Health

You need to inform the carer of

- Your child's GP, dentist etc
- Any medication or treatment they are receiving
- Any allergies or intolerance's to certain foods etc.

Making the placement work

It is important that you work together with the private foster carers, Childrens Services and all other child care professionals involved to ensure that the placement is as successful as possible for your child.

The needs of Black and minority ethnic children

Current research clearly suggests that is best for children to live in a family that has the same racial, ethnic, cultural and religious background. Carers with a similar background to your child are better placed to help your child understand their racial history, provide for their particular needs and help them to develop a positive sense of themselves.

You will need to think very carefully before placing your child with a foster carer whose ethnic origin is different from your child. Warrington Children's Services have to consider if your child's religious, racial, cultural and language needs are being met. This will be an important part of the assessment.

What should I do next?

By law, you are required to advise Warrington Borough Council about any private fostering arrangement:

- If you have already placed your child with private carers you must notify Warrington Childrens Service immediately (within 48 hours). Contact the Service Reception Team on 01925 444239.
- If you have arranged or are in the process of arranging to place your child with private carers you must give Warrington Children's Service at least 6 weeks written notice of your intentions.

What happens next?

Warrington Children's Services has a legal duty to check that the placement, the private foster carers and their premises are all suitable. So once you have told us about the proposed or current fostering arrangement the assessing social worker will ask the private foster carer for their permissions to carry out our standard statutory checks these include:

- Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau
- Social Service Checks
- Department of Health



Any other household member over the age of 16 will also have to agree to have these checks performed.

If they do not agree to these checks, or a member of their household does not agree, we will not be able to proceed with the assessment and you will have to arrange for alternative care to be provided.

What information will I need to tell Warrington Children's Services?

- Your child's name, date of birth, religion, racial origin and language
- How long you expect the child to stay with the carers
- Why the placement is needed
- Your name and address, and the details of anyone else who has parental responsibility for them
- The date you expect placement to start (or when the placement started if the placement has begun)
- The carers previous addresses for the last five years
- If you are aware of any criminal convictions of carers
- If the carers have applied to privately foster before and been disqualified.

Once all the checks are complete the worker will write a report about the carers, the suitability of their home, the reasons and intended length of the placement, your involvement in the placement and your child's views about the placement.

Warrington Children's Services will then make a decision about the carer's suitability to become a private foster carer. The worker will inform you about the decision, and as part of the arrangement they may need to impose some requirements, for example: limiting the

number of children a private foster carer may have living with them.

If the placement is agreed

After the placement has been agreed a worker will continue to support the private foster carer and your child. Children's Services have a legal requirement to see children in private foster placements regularly, at least once every six weeks during the first year. If the child is old enough, there may be arrangements to see the child on their own.

There will be a review of the arrangements every twelve months.

Finance

Any financial arrangement is made between you and the private foster carer. As the child's parent you retain financial responsibility for them. Ideally these arrangements should be set down in writing.

Warrington Children's Services will not become involved in these arrangements.



What if the approval of the placement is not agreed?

If the placement is not agreed, the worker will discuss with you, the proposed carer and your child the best arrangements for the child.

There could be a range of options, including:

- The child returning to live with you, with support services provided
- The child moving to live with a relative
- The child being looked after by the local authority

If approval has been denied and the proposed carer continues to care for the child, this might be deemed to be an offence.

If you or the carer wish to appeal against the decision, you should notify Warrington Children's Services in writing at the earliest opportunity. You will then be advised of what action the local authority will take and any further action you may wish to take.

What if the placement ends?

If your child leaves the private foster carers care you must inform Children's Services within 48 hours, giving the name and address of the person who has taken over the care of the child.

If your child dies whilst in the care of you, or your private foster carers, you should notify Children's Services within 48 hours.



If you need this information in other languages please ring
0161 234 3282



Contact

If you have any queries relating to private fostering, please contact Warrington Borough Council Service Reception Team on

01925 444239

Further sources of information & advice:
British Association of Adoption & Fostering (BAAF)
6-10 Kirby Street, London, EC1N 8TS

Website: www.baaf.org.uk
Tel: 0207 421 2600
Email: mail@baaf.org.uk

The Fostering Network
87 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HA

website: www.fostering.net
Tel: 0207 620 6400

Department for Education and Skills
Room 126, Wellington House
133 - 155 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UG

Tel: 0207 972 2000
Website: www.dfes.gov.uk

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